

just couldn't fall 'til we met by [iwillbeyourgoal](#)

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Summary:

"it had to be you, wonderful you – it had to be you"

eddie kaspbrak and richie tozier agree that they can't be friends. the problem is, they are.

a gratuitous when harry met sally au!

1. Chapter 1

Derry, Maine, 1998

Shirts suitcase, check. Pants suitcase, check. Church shoes, check, tennis shoes, check. Underwear, socks, rain jacket, snow jacket, regular jacket, check. Every medication, carefully labeled and separated by dosage and time of day, check ad infinitum.

Eddie Kaspbrak slowly and methodically went down the crumpled list that his mother had written out for him as he eyeballed the contents of his 1986 Chevy Suburban's trunk. If he ended up leaving anything behind – well, it was left. He wasn't coming back to Derry until Christmas, come hell or high water.

He'd just graduated from The University of Maine at Derry and the list was one of the conditions that came with his mother allowing him to leave the state for work. Yes, he was 22, yes, his mother still had a say in where he lived, get off his back. Getting a risk management job in New York was the easy part – convincing Sonia Kaspbrak to help finance a move to a city that was an eight hour drive away was akin to running a marathon, something Eddie very decidedly could not do.

Luckily, in the end he'd won, promising his mother he'd get a nice, safe job and live in a nice, safe neighborhood. The job wasn't necessarily something he was passionate about, but he figured knowing math and money could get you into lots of doors, so he was alright with the situation as it stood. He could take continuing education classes for French or, like, underwater basket weaving if the mood struck him. New York Eddie was going to be a new man, he could feel it.

After checking and double-checking his inventory, Eddie slammed his trunk and headed off to pick up the person he was riding with, Richie.

Richie Tozier was a friend of Eddie's friend Bill, the same age as Eddie, and he was going to be a comedian or something. They both needed a ride to New York City and Eddie, like an idiot, told Bill he'd

offer up his car if they alternated shifts driving. They'd never met before, but Derry was a small enough town and Eddie knew Richie's reputation as a loudmouth, a braggart, someone who didn't know when to quit – and for some reason he still said yes, I'll ride with him, sure, why not.

But first he had to get there in time for his first day of work, which was looking increasingly unlikely if Richie continued eating some poor girl's face like he was doing on the sidewalk, mere *feet* away from where Eddie was sitting in the driver's seat with his window rolled down.

Richie was wearing faded black jeans that looked like they'd been put through the shredder that Eddie's mom kept in their kitchen for destroying credit cards and old prescriptions, a slouchy army jacket and beaten and scuffed red Converse.

"Probably listens to Third Eye Blind," Eddie muttered disdainfully, straightening out his polo.

As Richie broke apart from the girl, who looked dazed, probably from contact stupidity, he raised an eyebrow.

"You must be Eddie," he said, thick Coke bottle glasses making his eyes look four times the size of his face. "This is Rebecca."

"Hi, Eddie," she – Rebecca – said somewhat sheepishly.

"Hello," Eddie managed with all the hesitant politeness that had been forced into him from birth.

"What's up?" Richie asked, as if he'd completely forgotten why Eddie was even there in the first place.

"We've got to get going," Eddie said shortly.

"Hold on a second," Richie replied, already closing in on the girl again. Eddie sighed and drummed his fingers on the wheel for what seemed like four thousand years before loudly clearing his throat.

"You wanna take the first shift?" he asked pointedly.

Richie waved a lazy hand at him, not even making eye contact as he picked up the two bags by his feet. “You’re already there, I’ll let you get it.”

“Trunk’s unlocked,” Eddie replied, trying his very, very hardest not to add “asshole” to the end of his statement.

After loading his admittedly few belongings into the car, Richie returned to Rebecca and resumed kissing her.

“Oh, I’m gonna miss you so much,” she said with a waver in her voice.

“I’m gonna miss you *more*,” Richie replied. “I’ll call you when we get there.”

“Call me from the road?”

“How ‘bout this,” Richie said, pressing another kiss to her lips. “I’ll call you before then.”

She giggled and sniffed a little bit. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

Eddie genuinely could not believe he was witnessing such a grotesque display, and he was growing to dislike Richie more and more by the second. As Richie crossed in front of the car to get inside, Eddie was murmuring, “Eight hours. Just eight hours. It’s just eight hours.”

Richie climbed into the passenger seat, and from this angle Eddie could see just how tall the boy was, which was Incredibly Tall. He fiddled with the adjustments, and even with the seat pushed all the way back his legs still seemed to be slightly cramped. Eddie felt sort of bad for him.

Sort of.

“So, Eds,” and wow, there went any good will he had stored up in the last few seconds, “You want some grapes?”

He held out a handful of green grapes that he must have been

keeping in his jacket pocket and Eddie eyed it disdainfully. “No thanks. I don’t eat between meals.”

Richie stared at him for a moment before shrugging and popping three in his mouth, chewing loudly.

“So,” Eddie started. “Eight hour drive, probably more with gas and food, so let’s say nine hours, I figure I can drive for four and a half or five and you can do the same. I’ve marked on the map – ” he tapped the visor, which he’d affixed an east coast map with a tie clip, as that was all he could find at the time “ – the ideal places for us to stop and some suggestions for restaurants that I found in different state guidebooks at the library.”

Richie was silent for a moment, and Eddie reveled in it. But then: “Nothing happens to you, does it?”

He was affronted, but he couldn’t deny it. “Well – no. But that’s why I’m going to New York.”

“So things can happen to you.”

“Right.”

“What kind of things?”

“Things like I’m going to live in New York City and work in risk management.”

“Oh, risk management?”

“Yes.”

“Lots of thrills there, I hear.”

“Yeah, tons of raves with boatloads of drugs and neon colors,” Eddie replied dryly. “Why, what are you planning to do?”

“Dunno,” Richie said through a mouthful of grape. “Might be a comedian, might work in radio. Columbia has an assistant professorship open for philosophical economics, that might be fun.”

Eddie would have stared except he was driving and his tombstone was not about to say *Edward Kaspbrak, born 1976, died in a fiery car wreck because the stranger he offered a ride to was either super smart or super fucking with him 1998.*

And the thing is, he would normally assume that someone was fucking with him if they said something like “philosophical economics might be fun” but Richie’s tone was even, and he was staring out the window with such a bored expression that Eddie knew in his gut he wasn’t joking.

“Do you ever think about death?” Richie asked suddenly, propping his head in his hand as he shifted to look at Eddie.

“Death?” Eddie scrunched his nose.

“Yeah. Dying. Do you ever think about it?”

“Sure,” Eddie said, unsure where this line of questioning was going.
“Sure, I think about death.”

“When I read a book,” Richie started, “I flip to the last page and read the ending so that if I die before I finish it, I’ll know how it ends.”

Eddie blinked. “That’s stupid.”

“Maybe so, but when I die I’ll know how Little Women ends, and you won’t.”

“Beth dies,” Eddie said mildly.

“What the *fuck!*!” Richie spluttered, and Eddie laughed for the first time that car ride. “I love Beth!”

“Me too. So does everyone. She *dies.*” Eddie was relaying this information with some satisfaction. “Shouldn’t be so upset if you’ve already read the ending.”

Richie scoffed. “Okay, maybe I skipped this one. But it’s not like that makes a difference to me, you know.”

“Sure, whatever,” Eddie allowed, a smile playing at his lips.

“I would’ve stayed,” Eddie said from the passenger seat.

“Bullshit you would have,” Richie said, emphatically hitting the steering wheel. “No one in their right mind would’ve stayed with Billy Zane, that’s why Rose doesn’t!”

“She doesn’t because she’s an idiot,” Eddie said matter-of-factly. “If she stays with Billy Zane, she can steal his money and vamoose. Versus Jack, a street rat who’s only on the fuckin’ boat in the first place because he cheated at poker? I’ll take robbing Billy Zane every time.”

“He did not cheat!”

“Watch it!” Eddie yelled, reaching for the wheel. Richie had been so adamant in his defense of Jack from “Titanic” that they nearly swerved into the next lane.

“Say he didn’t cheat or I swear to God I’ll crash us into a tree,” Richie demanded.

“Fine! He didn’t cheat! Fuck!”

“Thank you,” Richie said earnestly.

“I still wouldn’t have gone with him,” Eddie added, somewhat shittily. “He had no future, no prospects.”

“What is this, the 16th century?” Richie asked incredulously. “You would rather have gone with the abusive rich asshole on the basis that you *might* steal his money? Rather than the hot young kid that you’ve just had the best sex of your life with, just because he ‘had no prospects’?”

“Yes, and Rose is lucky he died, otherwise she would’ve been stuck with a deadbeat.”

“Oh, my God,” Richie said as they pulled into a diner. “I just – you know what? Never mind.”

“What?”

“Nothing, I said never mind,” Richie said, his tone reverting to suspiciously mild as the two of them got out of the car.

“What is it? Come on.”

“Just drop it!”

“Tell me!”

“Fine,” Richie said, turning around on the steps of the diner. “You obviously haven’t had great sex.”

If Eddie’s brainwaves could have registered, they’d be a flatline.

“Wh – yes I have!” he insisted, dropping his voice to a harsh whisper as they entered the building.

“Sure,” Richie shrugged, heading toward an empty booth.

“I have!”

“Listen,” Richie said, turning to sit down. “You wouldn’t be so defensive if you actually had, and that’s okay, so why don’t we drop it?”

“It’s *not* okay because it’s not true!” Eddie hissed, glancing nervously around them at the other patrons, who all seemed to be either elderly couples or families with children.

Richie didn’t say anything, just perused the menu. This was even more infuriating than the talking, so Eddie leaned in. “It just so happens that I have had plenty of great sex,” he said with an air of finality.

Sighing, Richie closed his menu. “Okay, I’ll bite. With whom?”

“Huh?”

“With whom have you had this mind-blowing sex?”

Eddie shuffled a bit in his seat. “Well, not that it’s any of your

business – ”

“Oh, that’s rich.”

“– but Edie McCready.”

Richie blinked. “Edie McCready,” he repeated.

“Yes,” Eddie nodded.

“You are not having great sex with Edie McCready.”

“Why’s that, dipshit?”

“Because her name fucking *rhymes*, and it’s also your name, and those two facts alone should be enough to turn any sane person off.”

“Well, I guess I’m not sane,” Eddie shot off before he realized what he’d said. Richie smirked at him as the waitress approached them with two glasses of water and introduced herself as Rhiannon.

“What can I get started for you?” she asked. Eddie wondered if the *SAVE ME* brainwaves he was sending out were reaching her, but judging by her pleasant smile he figured not.

“I’ll have the number 5,” Richie said, handing her the menu.

Eddie took a deep breath.

“I’ll have the Rueben with a side salad, but I’d like both dressings on the side and the pickle in a separate dish, and for dessert I’ll have pecan pie á la mode but I’d like the pie heated and the ice cream on the side.”

Rhiannon quirked an eyebrow but just scribbled on her notepad. “Rueben and salad, pickle and dressing on the side with pecan pie à la mode,” she repeated.

“And I’d like strawberry ice cream,” Eddie continued. “If you don’t have that then whipped cream, but only if it’s real, if it’s from a can then nothing.”

“Nothing, not even the pie?”

“No, I’d still like the pie, but then don’t heat it up.”

Rhiannon blinked. “Okay,” she managed before walking away.

Richie was staring, slack-jawed at Eddie while Eddie unfolded his napkin and put it in his lap.

He looked at Richie. “What?”

“Nothing,” Richie said after a pause, smirking and resting his chin on his hand. “Tell me more about Edie McCready.”

“Why?”

“I’m curious,” Richie shrugged. “How’d you break up?”

“How do you know we broke up?” Eddie challenged.

“Because if you were still with her, you’d *be* with her, and not halfway to New York with me.”

“Okay, first off,” Eddie started, taking his fork and point it at Richie. “I’m not ‘with’ you. I am driving alongside you. Second off, that reasoning is nonexistent.”

“Are you always this stubborn?” Richie asked, sipping his water.

“I am when the other person is wrong.”

“Jeez, fine, whatever. You don’t have to tell me.”

They were silent for a few long moments before Eddie broke. “Fine,” he groaned. “If you *have* to know, it was because she was very jealous and I lost a book she gave me.”

“That’s it?” Richie cocked his head. “Just because you lost a book?”

“Well, it’s not necessarily the fact that I lost it, it’s where I left it.”

“I’m almost afraid to ask.”

“The library.”

Richie’s brow furrowed. “Isn’t that where books live?”

“Well, that’s what she said. Why was I reading a book not from the library at the library? Why did I take an outside book inside? And I told her and she didn’t like it.”

“What?”

“I forgot that she gave it to me and that it wasn’t from the library.”

Snorting, Richie almost spit water all over the table, and Eddie smiled his first genuine smile of the trip.

After they’d eaten their meal, Eddie was very carefully calculating the tip.

“You know, you’re pretty good-looking,” Richie said casually, and Eddie almost choked.

“*What?*” he spit out, and he could already feel the blood rushing to his cheeks.

“You are,” Richie repeated. “Bill never mentioned how good-looking you were.”

“Well, maybe Bill doesn’t find me good-looking,” Eddie countered, finishing the tip and standing up to leave.

“Edie McCready’s loss,” Richie commented, following behind him, causing Eddie to whip around.

“You are *dating* someone!” he hissed as they left the diner.

“So?”

“So you’re... flirting with me, or something,” Eddie finished lamely.

“Not flirting,” Richie shrugged, crossing to the passenger side of Eddie’s car. “Just being honest.”

“Look,” Eddie said as he angrily fumbled with his keys and unlocked the door. “Even if I... were into guys, which, you know, it’s fine that you are, if you are, but I’m not – we could only ever just be friends.”

“We couldn’t be friends,” Richie said as if it were the most natural conclusion to reach.

“And why not?” Eddie didn’t know why he was so offended at the concept of friendship with this man he’d barely just meant being yanked away from him, but he was.

“Because people can’t be friends with people they find attractive,” Richie said, picking his teeth and glancing casually at Eddie. “They always end up wanting to have sex with each other. Then the sex thing is out there, and once it’s out there, everything’s ruined. Friendship over.”

“That’s bullshit.”

“It is not, it’s true and you know it.” Richie sighed. “Have you ever been friends with someone you find attractive – or vice versa – and it didn’t end in either sex or not speaking?”

“Yes,” Eddie answered flatly. “Plenty of times. Many of whom I’m still friends with, and there’s no attraction involved anymore, so.”

“I don’t believe you,” Richie said, a slight laugh playing off his words. “You *think* you’re still friends with them without any attraction, but I’d bet dollars to donuts they still wanna bone.”

“What does ‘dollars to donuts’ even *mean*?” Eddie murmured, but Richie kept on.

“You cannot be just friends with someone you find attractive, and that is why you and I will never be friends.”

“Hm,” Eddie said, something small tugging at his heart. “That’s too bad.”

“Why’s that?”

“You were gonna be the only person I knew in New York,” he said

honestly. Richie looked at him for a moment but said nothing.

They reached Washington Square Park, where Richie had found an apartment on the corner of, at 9:40 that night.

Eddie slowed to a stop in a parking spot and got out to help Richie unload his bags.

“Well,” he said as Richie stretched and slung one of his bags over his shoulder. “Thanks for the... company, I guess.”

“Yeah, you too,” Richie replied, already on his way under the arch.

“Have a nice life,” Eddie called.

“Same for you, Eds.”

Eddie stared after him for a second and then shook his head as he got back into his car to head to his new life.

Author's Note:

please know that i wanted so VERY VERY badly to include the "days of the week underwear" exchange in this chapter but i simply could not fit it in. i hope you'll find it in your hearts to forgive me.

this will probably be around 5 chapters! i think this movie fits their personalities so well and i'm so excited to explore that.

comments are never expected but always appreciated!

2. Chapter 2

Notes for the Chapter:

the biggest thank you to hollz/rancidtozier on tumblr
for the excellent beta-ing on this chapter ❤️

New York City, 2003

Eddie rushed through JFK International Airport with his girlfriend Myra trailing after him.

“Slow down, Eddiebear!” she called , and if he wasn’t in such a hurry to reach his gate he would tell her, for what felt like the millionth time, not to call him that.

“B5, B5, B5,” he repeated, scanning the signs until he saw his gate number appear at the end of the wing. He breathed a sigh of relief and slowed down a bit.

“Cripes almighty, Eddie,” Myra said as she caught up to him. “You’re gonna give me a heart attack, the way you run around.”

“Sorry, honey,” he said, reading his ticket again just to make sure he was at the right gate in the right airport. “I told you how I get when I fly.”

She smiled sympathetically. “I know, I know.”

Eddie and Myra had been dating for almost three months. She worked a few floors down from his office and they had seen each other in the elevator every day until she asked if he’d like to go to dinner. She was... nice. Fine. Their relationship was comfortable. And wasn’t that all Eddie really wanted? Nice, fine comfort? He didn’t know if he could ask for any more.

They stood outside the gate and Myra took his hands.

“Now, do you have your inhaler?”

“Yes.”

“Your anti-anxiety meds?”

“I do.”

“First aid kit if anything goes wrong?”

“Yes, Myra,” he said. He knew she was just trying to look after him, but it really could be a drag sometimes to have to share an itinerary with your partner, along with your list of meds and emergency contacts.

“Okay, good,” she said, smiling as she kissed his cheek.

He did like Myra, he really did. They even lived in the same borough, which made a lot of things a lot easier. She sometimes brought over groceries if he’d forgotten to shop that week. Sometimes if he needed a break from his incessantly loud neighbors, he’d pop over to her apartment for the night. It was all very domestic, he thought.

“Now, be sure to call me when you land, and – oh!” she glanced past his shoulder and her eyebrows raised.

“Myra!” a voice, a *horribly* familiar voice, called from behind Eddie.

“Hello, Richie,” she said, smiling politely at the man who approached them. He was very tall, with thick black-rimmed glasses, 5 o’clock shadow, messy brown hair and clothes that seemed to not fit and perfectly fit at the same time.

Richie fucking Tozier , Eddie thought, his breath caught in his throat.

“Myra, it’s been too long,” Richie said, grinning. Eddie took half a step backward, hoping he might fade into the bland grey of the beam behind him. “Still working at that doctor’s office?”

“I am, actually. How have you been? The building’s been so quiet without you.”

Eddie was flabbergasted – he’d like to think he knew his girlfriend pretty well, and he would never, in ten million years, have guessed

that Myra would think Richie Tozier was anything less than a blowhard know-it-all.

“Just about as well as it can be in the world of comedy,” Richie said, eyes flickering over to Eddie. “I’m actually flying out today to open for Adam Sandler’s tour in a few days.”

“Wow!” Myra swatted Eddie lightly on the shoulder. “Oh, where are our manners. Eddie, this is Richie Tozier. He’s a comedian. We used to live on the same floor in our building before he got to be such a hot-shot and moved out. He used to make me *laugh* in the hallway. Oh, but anyway! Richie, this is my boyfriend Eddie Kaspbrak.”

Richie was now fully grinning and stuck out his hand. “Nice to meet you, Eddie.”

The reluctance with which Eddie took Richie’s hand and shook it could not be overstated.

“You too,” was all he said.

The three of them were silent for a beat and Eddie could feel the discomfort rolling off of Myra in waves.

“Okay!” Richie said, clapping his hands together. “Got a flight to catch, so – Myra, always a pleasure. Eddie – it was so nice to meet you.”

Eddie arranged his lips into a facsimile of a smile until Richie had turned the corner, and he relaxed.

“Thank *God* he couldn’t place me, I drove from college to New York with him five years ago and it was the longest night of my life.”

Myra looked shocked. “You know Richie?”

“I wouldn’t say that at all,” Eddie admitted, glancing at the spot where Richie had just been. “I mean, I guess I knew him for the nine hours it took to drive from Derry to midtown Manhattan.”

“Why was it such a bad drive?”

“He... uh...” Eddie was going to say ‘he hit on me,’ but come to think of it, he didn’t know if Richie was out of the closet – or even *in* it, truth be told. “He just made things really uncomfortable, like, the whole trip.”

Technically not untrue.

“Aw, Eddiebear,” Myra said, ruffling his hair (two for two on things he hated) and smiling. “Richie’s just a bit out there is all. You’re not used to it.”

Eddie deflated a bit. “Yeah, I guess you’re right.” A memory flickered in his mind from that trip five years ago, though, and he frowned at the thought. “I do remember this, though. He said people who were attracted to each other could never be friends. Do you think that’s true?”

“Well, of course it’s not true,” Myra said with an air of not having given it any thought at all. “We both have plenty of friends, and we’re two good-looking folks.”

“Mm,” Eddie said, still trying to remember how the rest of that conversation went. “Well, anyway. Flight’s in about an hour and you’ve got to get to work.”

She smiled, smoothing out his shirt as she did. “You’re right. I just want to make sure you’re sent off with a proper goodbye.”

Leaning into him, they kissed, and it was like every other kiss they’d had since they first done it on the sidewalk outside of the barbecue joint in Eddie’s neighborhood where they’d gone on their third date. Warm. Nice.

Comfortable.

As they broke apart, Myra’s warm brown eyes met his. “I love you,” she said quietly, for the first time in their relationship.

Eddie blinked. “You do?”

She nodded, and before he could even register his thoughts, he replied, “I love you, too.”

Well, that was news to him. Thanks, brain.

Squealing, Myra pulled him into a tight hug. “Call me when you land! Be safe!”

“Yeah, I will.”

“Please call me!”

“I will, Myra.”

“This is Delta flight 1628 to Los Angeles, I’m Carlos and I’ll be your pilot today. We’re looking at a...”

The pilot’s pleasantly deep voice droned on as Eddie settled in for the flight. He pulled out his copy of “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” and opened it to about a fourth of the way through. He was, admittedly, a little too old for the series, but you couldn’t turn a corner without hearing someone talk about it, and besides, this book was turning out to be a lot darker and more interesting than the previous four entries.

The flight attendant with the drink cart came by soon after he started reading.

“Would you like something to drink?” she asked, and Eddie placed a napkin on the page and closed his book. He wanted to give her his full attention.

“I’d like a Diet Coke with lime,” he said.

“Alright,” she replied as she began to write his order.

“No,” he said, as politely as he could muster. “Here’s what I want. I want a cup of Coke filled about three quarters of the way full with just a few ice cubes, just a few, and I’d like the lime on the side.”

She nodded, eyebrows raised. “Sure,” she said as she moved to the

man next to him.

“University of Maine at Derry?” came a voice from behind him, and Eddie instinctively screwed his eyes shut.

He turned around to face Richie Tozier, whose face was almost split in two with how wide he was grinning.

“Yes,” he said reluctantly.

“Did you look like... this at UMD?”

This could be taken as an insult or a compliment, so Eddie just decided to answer truthfully. “No.”

“Did I sleep with any of your friends?”

Eddie’s seatmate snorted, having watched the whole horrifying debacle.

“No!” Eddie replied. “Jesus.” He turned to his seatmate. “We drove together from the University of Maine at Derry to New York.”

“Oh! Would you two like to sit together?”

“No,” Eddie answered emphatically at the same time Richie chirped, “That’d be great!”

The man, to Eddie’s deep chagrin, rose from his seat and traded with Richie, who noticed the book in his lap and grinned even wider.

“Oh, man,” was all he said, but Eddie remembered his rampage about spoiling books – or that was how it presented to him in his memories.

“No,” he said fervently. “No, Richie, I swear to God if you spoil this book for me I will murder you. I have a good life. A comfortable life. If you spoil this book, I will *risk it all* to end yours.”

“You remembered my name,” Richie said gleefully, and Eddie rolled his eyes.

“That’s what you took from that?”

Richie just shrugged. “So, I’m a comedian, we’ve covered that already. You wanted to be a – a video game developer, right?”

Eddie blinked. “I work in risk management.”

“Risk management, right. And how’s that?”

“Fine. I work at a firm in Soho.”

“And you’re with Myra.” Richie’s face, even with a smile, was unreadable.

“I am,” Eddie said slowly.

“You’ve been together – what, two months?”

“Three,” Eddie said incredulously. “How did you know?”

“I’d say about four months is the cutoff for taking people to the airport,” Richie explained. “I never take anyone I’m seeing to the airport in the first few months.”

“And why’s that.” It was a statement rather than a question; Eddie was already exhausted from this interaction.

“Because when you take someone to the airport at the beginning of a relationship, the second you *don’t* take them to the airport, it’s all, ‘Why don’t you take me to the airport anymore? Don’t you care? Why don’t you look at me *during*?’”

Eddie blinked.

“Okay, maybe not that last part,” Richie admitted. “But the rest is true.”

“It’s incredible,” Eddie said. “You look like a somewhat normal person but in actuality you are the angel of death.”

“Are you gonna marry her?”

Eddie scoffed.

“We’ve only been dating for three months, I just told you, and besides, I’m not looking to get married right now.”

“I’m getting married,” Richie informed him, straightening in his seat somewhat.

“You *are*?” Eddie’s mouth was agape.

“Yes,” Richie said, chuckling. “Her name’s Laura. She’s a defense attorney.”

“Wow.” Eddie shook his head.

“What?” Richie was looking at him inquisitively.

“Well, it’s – it’s just so optimistic of you, that’s all.”

Richie shrugged. “That’s what falling in love’ll do to you.”

“I guess it is,” Eddie admitted hesitantly.

“Plus, you know, you just get tired of being... out there, you know?”

“Out there?”

“You know, single. Dating around, oh, do you like these types of movies, oh, you don’t? Great, here’s the check, bye. Repeat until dead.”

“So you’re getting married instead.”

“Trust me, Eds.” Eddie grimaced; he’d forgotten the endearment Richie had grown so fond of on the car ride. “For me, this is the best option.”

There was something in Richie’s tone, something that suggested he wasn’t telling Eddie the whole truth, and normally Eddie would push back, but in this instance he felt it was better to let it lie.

“Well, Richie,” he finally said. “I’m really happy for you. I honestly am.” And he was.

Richie looked like he was about to say something, but then shut his

mouth. “Well, I’ll let you get back to your book, which I’m definitely not going to spoil. For now.”

Eddie didn’t know why he was almost... sad that Richie was going to stop talking to him, but he ignored the emotion, and nodded, opening “Order of the Phoenix” back up.

“Hermione fucks Hedwig,” Richie leaned in and muttered.

“Oh, my *God* ,” Eddie groaned, letting his head thud onto the open book on his tray.

They reached LA six and a half hours later, Richie spending the majority of it sleeping and snoring loudly. About halfway through, his head had slipped off of his headrest and onto Eddie’s shoulder, but Eddie had been hesitant to move or wake him. A quiet Richie on his shoulder was better than a talking Richie in the seat next to him, after all.

Exiting the terminal, Richie caught up to Eddie on the moving walkway.

“Hey, Eddie,” he said, and his tone caused Eddie to stop walking.

“Yeah?” he asked cautiously.

“Do you... wanna go to dinner with me tonight?” Richie looked almost nervous, and Eddie frowned. “As friends! Just friends.”

“I thought you said people who found each other attractive couldn’t be friends,” Eddie deadpanned.

“What?” Richie’s nose scrunched. “Me? Say that? No. What?”

“It’s true! You said if one of them found the other attractive then sex was in the way, or something.”

Richie paused for a second before nodding. “I... did say that, yes. But! The statement is rendered moot if both parties are in a relationship, which we are. That is the only way you can be friends.”

“Playin’ it pretty fast and loose with these rules, Richie.”

“It’s true! Except, of course, then the significant others want to know why you’re going outside the relationship, ‘what do they have that I don’t,’ then it spirals and they end up leaving you, so, we’re back at the start. Can’t be friends. But we can still be two people who happen to sit at the same table at this restaurant in North Hollywood I have a reservation at tonight?”

If Eddie didn’t know any better he’d think there was a hint of hopefulness in Richie’s tone. But he did know better.

“Richie?”

“Yes, Eddie?”

“Goodbye.”

Richie’s eyebrows raised at this, but then he smiled ruefully.

“Bye, Eddie.”

Eddie walked ahead of Richie on the moving sidewalk and rolled his eyes. If there was a God, and usually Eddie was ambivalent but this time he really, *really* hoped there was – if there was a God, this would be the last time he ever saw Richie Tozier.

Notes for the Chapter:

a few things!

-order of the phoenix is the best harry potter book, eddie and i have the right opinions

-i'm not interested in portraying myra as the Evil Abusive Girlfriend in this fic. i think her character has a lot of nuance, and this fic isn't necessarily the place to examine that.